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XXIII.—A RECLASSIFICATION OF THE PERCEVAL ROMANCES

In *The Folk-Lore Record* for 1881 (Vol. 4, pp. 1 ff.), Mr. Alfred Nutt published an article entitled "The Aryan Expulsion-And-Return Formula in the Folk- and Hero Tales of the Celts." In this article, Mr. Nutt advances the theory that the Perceval romances, the English and the Welsh versions especially, are variants of the Expulsion and Return formula. This classification has been accepted by subsequent writers, with the result that the English version, *Sir Perceval*, is declared to be the most faithful representative of the so-called primitive or original form of the story.

It is the purpose of this study, first, to show that Mr. Nutt's classification of these stories is not well founded; and secondly, to offer a new classification, which, if correct, may have some slight bearing, perhaps, on certain current theories regarding the primitive form of the story and regarding the inter-relations of several of the versions.

Let me say at the outset that I am not here concerned with the question of ultimate localization of the Perceval material; nor am I concerned with the intricate problems of the Grail legend. My problem is merely one of classification, and as a working basis for its solution, the English version, *The Romance of Sir Perceval of Galles*,¹ is made use of.

The plot of this story is as follows:—

Perceval's father is a brother-in-law to King Arthur and a knight of noble prowess; but in a tournament given in honor of the birth

¹ Printed by J. O. Halliwell in *The Thornton Romances*.

of his son, he is slain for revenge by the Red Knight. Regarding the death of her lord as an ominous portent concerning her son, Perceval's mother, Achefflour, flees with him to a forest where he is brought up in ignorance of the practices of chivalry. Being allowed some freedom, the lad sets out one day to find the great God of whom his mother has told him, and accidentally meets Gawain, Iwain, and Kay, all mounted and clad in green. Perceval asks which one is the great God; they think that he is a fool and inform him that they are only knights of Arthur's court. He returns home mounted upon a wild mare that he has caught, and his mother sees that her precautions have been in vain. The next day, Perceval sets out to demand knighthood of Arthur. His mother gives him a ring as a parting token of remembrance, and counsels him regarding his future conduct. On his way he stops at a hall where he finds no one but a sleeping lady, from whom he takes a ring, placing his own upon her finger. He then rides forward to Arthur's hall, where his rude behavior attracts unfavorable attention from the knights; but Arthur, noticing the resemblance to the late Syr Percyvelle, receives him courteously. Perceval demands knighthood and the king promises to grant it if the youth will regain the golden cup which the Red Knight has just carried away. Perceval, destined to avenge his father's death, pursues the Red Knight, kills him, and secures the desired cup. He is about to burn the knight out of his armor as Gawain rides up and assists in removing it. The cup is sent back to the king, but Perceval dons the Red Knight's armor and sets out on adventures. He soon meets a witch, the mother of the Red Knight, and kills her. He comes to the castle of his uncle, and while there hears of Lady Lufamour, who is besieged by a Sultan who wishes to marry her. Perceval goes to her assistance and slays all the Saracens before her castle. Meantime, Arthur and three of his knights arrive on the scene and the hero is knighted. Then he kills the Sultan, weds Lufamour, and rules her land for a year, after which he sets forth to find his mother. On his way he chances upon the lady from whom he took the ring, bound to a tree. She has been left there by her lord, the Black Knight, who believed her guilty of an intrigue with a stranger. Perceval fights with the Black Knight and overthrows him; he declares that no harm was done the lady and that he will return her ring if he may have back his own. Then he learns that his mother's token has been given to a giant, who proves to be the brother of the slain Sultan. Perceval slays the giant, enters the castle, and secures his ring from a box of jewels turned over to him by the porter. At the sight of the ring, the porter becomes disturbed, and finally tells Perceval that

the giant once offered it to a lady, who became distraught and ran away as soon as ever she saw it; for she recognized it and thought that the giant had slain her son. Then Perceval goes to find his mother, thus referred to, is successful, and carries her to the giant's castle. After she is restored, he returns with her to the queen, Lufamour, and all live there together. Some time later he goes to the Holy Land, where he wins many cities but eventually is killed.

I am not aware that Mr. Nutt's classification of this story as a variant of the Expulsion and Return formula has been formally challenged. Several writers on the subject have consistently objected to his quoting individual Celtic folk tales (or any folk tales for that matter) as parallels to the Perceval story, asserting that the very tales quoted are no more than the "reflex of the written literature that they are intended to illustrate."¹ In addition to taking this point of view, Mr. W. W. Newell, in his papers on *The Legend of the Holy Grail* (Cambridge, Mass., 1902), page 10, advances the idea that the object of Chrétien's poem on Perceval was "to describe the education of a simple nature." As a parallel, Mr. Newell then cites *The Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat*, a Christian recast of the life of Guatama Buddha. "As the central idea of the legend," he says, "is to set forth instruction in Christianity, so that of the Perceval is to recount education in chivalry; and it would seem necessary to seek no further for the fundamental conception of Chrestien."

However applicable this statement may be to Chrétien's poem, it certainly has no bearing upon the English version, *Sir Perceval*. It may even be questioned whether that

¹ See M. Gaster, "The Legend of the Grail," *Folk-Lore*, 1891, pp. 52 ff. See also H. Zimmer in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1890, No. 12, pp. 510 ff.

is the sole central idea of any of the versions, including Chrétien's. Moreover, Mr. Newell says nothing against Mr. Nutt's classification, the argument for which we shall now examine in some detail.¹

The Expulsion and Return formula comprises thirteen incidents, tabulated by Mr. Nutt as follows:—²

- I. Hero born—
 - (a) Out of wedlock.
 - (b) Posthumously.
 - (c) Supernaturally.
 - (d) One of twins.
- II. Mother, princess residing in her own country.
- III. Father—
 - (a) God } from afar.
 - (b) Hero }
- IV. Tokens and warning of hero's future greatness.
- V. He is in consequence driven forth from home.
- VI. Is suckled by wild beasts.
- VII. Is brought up by a (childless couple), or shepherd, or widow.
- VIII. Is of passionate and violent disposition.
- IX. Seeks service in foreign lands.

¹In his recent book, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, published after this study was written and after the substance of it was presented before the 1910 meeting of the Modern Language Association of America, Mr. R. H. Griffith reconstructs what he calls the A-Stage [or primitive form] of the Perceval story and says: "The summary [of the primitive form of the story] is too specific and too detailed to be considered merely a formula, such, for example, as the 'Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula.'" P. 118.

²As first presented by Mr. Nutt, this formula comprised eighteen incidents. Later, in his book, *The Legend of the Holy Grail*, pp. 153-4, he reduced the number to thirteen as here quoted; the last five of the original list were omitted. Mr. Nutt does not say why.

- IX. A. Attacks and slays monsters.
- IX. B. Acquires supernatural knowledge through eating a fish, or other magic animal.
- X. Returns to his own country, retreats, and again retreats.
- XI. Overcomes his enemies, frees his mother, seats himself on the throne.

After comparing the Welsh *Peredur* and the English *Sir Perceval* with this formula, Mr. Nutt says, "In all probability, the lost original of these two versions was in almost entire conformity with the formula." Of these thirteen incidents, Mr. Nutt says, "The English version contains the first, perhaps the sixth, the eighth, and eleventh incident in proper sequence and in perfectly recognizable form." Let us examine this statement a little more closely. The first incident of Mr. Nutt's Expulsion and Return formula is: The hero is born out of wedlock, posthumously, supernaturally, or one of twins. As a matter of fact, *Sir Perceval* is born in wedlock; he is born before his father is killed; his birth is perfectly natural; and he is the only child. The poem is clear on these points.¹ The presence of the sixth incident—the hero is suckled by wild beasts—Mr. Nutt qualifies with a mild "perhaps." The following lines are quoted by Mr. Nutt as the basis for his conclusion; I believe that they speak for themselves.

He
 in the wilde wodde went
 With bestez to playe,
 With wilde bestez for to playe.

(174-177.)

¹Mr. Nutt also states that *Peredur* is posthumously born (*Folk-Lore Record*, IV, p. 43), but I have been unable to find any ground for the statement.

This leaves us only numbers VIII and XI. Number VIII declares that the hero is of passionate and violent disposition. No one would deny that Sir Perceval has such a nature; but so have countless other heroes, who, on that basis, have good right to be classed with Sir Perceval. Such a trait of character, moreover, could hardly be distinctive in any formula, especially when unaccompanied with more essential features of that formula than are found in the English *Sir Perceval*, and we must not allow it too much emphasis here. As for the remaining incident, the XIth, the English story of *Sir Perceval* contains it—the one, and only one, vital point in common between the Expulsion and Return formula and our romance.

But even if three or four incidents pointed out by Mr. Nutt were as closely in common between the Expulsion and Return formula and the English *Sir Perceval* as he thinks they are, I do not believe that they are important enough to determine the type. As I take it, the main point of the Expulsion and Return formula is this: A decree is passed which calls for the death or punishment of some youth. To escape that death or punishment, the youth is sent or is taken abroad, it may be to a wilderness. The so-called exile or flight is for a definite purpose, and that purpose is always accomplished. This is true in the case of the Great Fool and other Expulsion and Return heroes cited by Mr. Nutt; but it is not true in the case of Sir Perceval.

Assuming now that Mr. Nutt's classification of the English *Sir Perceval* and of the other versions of the story is no longer tenable, I wish to present the theory that the story is virtually a combination of two other well-known and widely-distributed formulas of folk-lore,—

namely, The Male Cinderella and The Fated Prince. Scholars are pretty well agreed in considering the Perceval legend as a Male Cinderella or Dummling story,—that is, the story of a youth who, although unpromising and ridiculed, suddenly performs some great feat and thenceforth becomes a great hero. Before considering further the Male Cinderella feature of the Perceval story, I wish first to examine the story in its relation to the Fated Prince formula.

A comparison of a number of Fated Prince stories enables us to tabulate seven points as characteristic of the formula, as follows:—¹

- I. A woman of high rank gives birth to a beautiful son, who may be born as a divine reward, and who is devotedly loved by both parents.
- II. There is prophesied for the child a destiny that is displeasing to the parents.

¹ A widely-spread form of the theme is as follows: A poor man has a son of whom it is predicted that he shall marry the king's daughter. Angered about the prophecy, the king seeks to get control of the boy, and succeeds usually by giving the parents a large sum of money. Then the king places the child in a box which he throws into the river, thinking the matter is ended. But the child is rescued, usually by a miller, and is cared for until he is grown. The king meets him again and sends him to the queen with a letter calling for the immediate execution of the bearer. The hero stops over night at a hut on his way, and friendly hands substitute for the "death warrant" a letter bidding the queen to marry the bearer to the king's daughter. The marriage takes place; the king is enraged and sends his son-in-law upon a perilous journey. The youth is successful, however, and the story ends with the downfall of the king and the accession of the hero to the throne. See Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, No. 29 and Notes; Groome, *Gypsy Folk-Tales*, p. 133 and Note; Wratislaw, *Sixty Folk-Tales*, pp. 16 and 278; Hahn, *Griechische und Albanesische Märchen*, No. 20; Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone*, 2:8; Schmidt, *Griechische Märchen*, No. 2, p. 67; Wardrop, *Georgian Folk-Tales*, pp. 22, 25, and 83. See also the story of Achilles.

- III. In order to thwart the accomplishment of that destiny, the son is taken to be brought up in some remote district.
- IV. A numerous household accompanies the youth and every precaution is taken to keep him from contact with anything that might assist the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- V. As a result of being granted some freedom, the boy accidentally comes in contact with beings that concern his fate or destiny.
- VI. By inquiry he gains intelligence concerning those beings, and decides to leave home.
- VII. He sets out into the world, and after a number of adventures, finally suffers the fate that was predicted at the time of his birth.

Let us turn to the English *Sir Perceval* to see how far these various incidents are there represented. The numerals used correspond to the incidents as just tabulated.

I

Sir Perceval, the hero of the romance, was the only son of Syr Percyvelle and Achefflour, a sister of King Arthur and a woman of high rank. Perceval is not necessarily a divine reward, and need not be; yet, his advent into the world was the occasion for great rejoicing on the part of all concerned. The formula demands that a Fated Prince hero be loved by his parents. That Perceval was loved by his father is shown in the following lines (105-112):

Whenne the childe was borne,
He made calle it one the morne,

Als his fadir highte byforne,
 ȝonge Percyvelle:
 The knyghte was fayne, a feste made
 For a knave childe that he hade,
 And sythene, withowttene any bade,
 Offe justynges thay telle!

In the tournament that was set in honor of this son, we are told that (130-132)

Percyvelle hase wele done
 For the love of his ȝonge sone,
 One the firste day.

That Achefflour loved her son goes almost without saying; it is manifest throughout the poem. Indeed, the unity of the poem and the well-constructed plot both depend upon that mother's love for her son. After the death of her lord, everything that Achefflour does springs from that motive. Her purpose in taking Perceval away from the place where "dedez of armez shalle be donne"; her constant concern for keeping him always with her in the wood (249); her alarm when she sees him bringing home a horse (349 ff.); her sorrow when he tells her of his meeting with the knights (385 ff.); her desire to have him conduct himself properly after he sets out for Arthur's hall (390 ff.); and finally, her insanity, which is the immediate result of her thinking that her son has been killed—all bespeak a love that was at once deep and enduring. This fact is of vital significance in connection with the Fated Prince formula, and it must not be overlooked when we come to consider the story in its relation to the Male Cinderella formula.

II

The English romance, to be sure, contains no verbal prophecy concerning the fate of the hero. Instead, the

author has the father killed in a tournament given in celebration of the birth of his son (109 ff.). This incident, however, augurs the future of the boy. From it, the mother infers that her son is to become a knight and is to avenge the death of his father. She infers also that he may possibly be slain in the process. That Achefflour is profoundly impressed and even terrified by this portent is manifest in the precaution which she takes to forestall its fulfillment. Certainly the young bride has seen enough of the career of knighthood. She has seen her lord victorious in many combats only to be slain at last by his mortal enemy. She foresees the same knightly career for her son if nature is to have its way. If she remains at court with him, she knows that he will become a knight. Moreover, he would be expected to follow the career of his father, and at last to avenge openly that father's death. She looks upon the future of her son as fixed unless something is done to change it. The incident of her lord's death had opened that future to her view. It was in effect a prophecy of fate at which she was highly displeased.

Furthermore, after Perceval has met the knights in the wood and has returned home with a horse, his mother realizes that her precautions have been in vain (349-356):

The lady was never more sore bygone,
Scho wiste never whare to wonne,
Whenne scho wiste hir jonge sonne
Horse hame brynge!

Scho saw hym horse hame brynge,
Scho wiste wele by that thyng
That the kynde wolde oute-sprynge,
For thyng that be moughte.

In these lines, the author speaks the mind of the mother

of Perceval, and records the fulfillment of an apparent prophecy in regard to what was considered to be the future or fate of the hero. To my mind, these lines sum up the essential theme of the poem,—namely, the hero was destined to become a knight and to avenge the death of his father in spite of all precaution to the contrary. This was the fate which that mother feared; this was the fate which she saw prophesied in the death of her lord.

The poem furnishes another curious bit of evidence as to what might be regarded as a definite prophecy concerning the future knightly achievement of the hero. Arthur has told him that one of his favorite knights, Syr Percyvelle, had been slain fifteen years before by “a theffe” on whom vengeance had not been taken. He then says (562-568):

“There is no mane apone lyfe,
With swerde, spere, ne with knyfe,
May stroye hym allane,
But if it were syr Percyvelle sone;
Who so wiste where he ware done,
The bokes says that he mone
Venge his fader bane.”

Whether or not these lines point to an older version of the story in which some such formal prophecy received a great deal more emphasis, it is difficult to prove. There seems to be some evidence in favor of that view, which if correct makes strongly for my contention.¹ On the other hand, if the present classification of the romance as a variant of the Fated Prince formula be correct, the existence of an older version of the story in which the formal prophecy is an important feature becomes almost certain.

These three incidents in the poem, then,—the death of Perceval's father with its prophetic import, the record of

¹ See Nutt, *Legend of the Holy Grail*, p. 156.

the fulfillment of an apparent prophecy at the time Perceval brought home the horse, and the lines spoken by Arthur concerning the son's avenging the death of his father—are sufficient, I think, to make clear the presence of the second incident of the Fated Prince formula in the romance. Perceval was fated to become a knight and to avenge the death of his father. Perceval's mother thought that in the process of the fulfillment of the vengeance her son would be killed; consequently, she was highly displeased at the prospect of his being destined to avenge his father's death at all.

III AND IV

The third and fourth incidents in the Fated Prince formula may be considered together. The third is the removal of the son to some remote district for the purpose of preventing the fulfillment of the prophecy. The fourth concerns the further precautions taken by the parents for the same purpose. The following lines from the romance show how faithfully these incidents are there preserved (161-192):

And now is Percyvelle the wighte
Slayne in batelle and in fyghte;
And the lady hase gyffene a gyfte,
 Holde if scho may,
That scho schalle nevermare wonne
In stede with hir jonge sonne,
Ther dedez of armez schalle be donne,
 By nyghte ne be daye;
Bot in the wodde schalle he be,
Salle he nothyng see
Bot the leves of the tree,
 And the greves graye:
Schalle he nowther take tent
To justez ne to tournament,

Bot in the wilde wodde went
With bestez to playe.

With wilde bestez for to playe,
Scho tuke hir leve and went hir waye,
Bothe at barone and at raye,
And went to the wodde.
Byhynde scho leved boure and haille;
A maydene scho tuke hir withalle,
That scho myȝte appone calle,
Whenne that hir nede stode:
Other gudez wolde scho nonne nayte;
Bot with hir tuke a tryppe of gayte,
With mylke of thame for to bayte
To hir lyves fode;
Off alle hir lordes faire gere
Wolde scho noȝte with hir bere,
Bot a lyttille Scottes spere,
Agayne hir sone ȝode.

And (229-232),

Fyftene wynter and mare
He duellede in those holtes hare,
Nowther nurture ne lare
Scho wolde hym none lere.

Then (236-240) she asked him to pray

"To goddez sone dere
That he wolde helpe the,
Lorde, for his poustee,
A gude mane for to bee.
And longe to duelle here!"

In the fourth incident as represented in the romance, one important variation from the formula is noticeable: the large attending company in the flight has given place to one maid-servant, and the palace, which usually is erected for the son, has dropped out completely. This change may be due to the extra precautions which the author has Achefflour take; or it may be due to the presence

of the Male Cinderella formula in the same story. In the latter case, the author desiring to emphasize the unpromising character of his hero thought it necessary, in order to be completely consistent, to change the hero's youthful environment, making it in large measure responsible for his reputation and character.

V

Perceval, similarly to the hero in the Fated Prince story, is allowed some freedom by his mother. When Acheflour arrives at her destination, she gives the boy a spear and bids him "walke in the wodde" (230); and much of his time is spent in hunting "bestes and othere gere" in the wild wood (209 ff.). It is to be noted here that Acheflour had no fear whatever that her son might be killed by wild beasts; the danger was connected only with deeds of arms, and it lay in her belief that her son was fated to avenge his father's death.

The result of allowing the youth such freedom is identical with what we find in the Fated Prince formula. Perceval's mother has taken him to the wood in order to keep him from contact with deeds of arms. She does not want him even to know what knights are, or to know anything that pertains to a knightly career. Arrived in her retreat, she allows her son the freedom of the wood, and as a result he meets three knights, the very beings who are most closely connected with his fate and from whom he has been jealously guarded (275 ff.).

VI

The hero of the Fated Prince story makes inquiries and learns certain facts concerning what he has just seen.

Perceval does the same in regard to the knights whom he has seen. He asks them what kind of "thynges" they are (295); and learning that they are knights of King Arthur, he asks (315-16):

"Wille king Arthoure make me knyghte,
And I come hym tille?"

Shortly after Perceval leaves the knights whom he has met, he catches a mare and says (343-44),

. "Thou salle bere me
To morne to the kyng."

He returns to his mother and gives the following account of his adventure (373-380):

"Moder, at þonder hille hafe I bene,
There hafe I thre knyghtes sene,
And I hafe spokene with thame, I wene,
Wordes in throo;
I have highte thame alle thre
Before thaire kyng for to be,
Siche one schalle he make me
As is one of tho!"

VII

The last incident tabulated under the Fated Prince formula is the departure of the youth from home and the fulfillment of his destiny. After Perceval has decided to leave home, and has made known that decision to his mother, she yields reluctantly and gives him friendly counsel and a ring. The youth then mounts upon his mare and sets out for Arthur's hall. After certain adventures on the way, he finally arrives at his destination, rides rudely up to Arthur, and demands knighthood, saying (527-28),

"Bot if the kyng make me knyghte,
I salle hym slaa!"

Then Perceval learns of the Red Knight, who soon enters the hall, calls the king and all the knights recreants, seizes the gold cup before the king, and rides away with it. For five years he had done this and no one had dared to seek vengeance.

"Petir!" quod Percyvelle the yunge,
"Hym thanne wille (I) downe dyngre,
And the coupe agayne brynge,
And thou wille make me knyghte.

(641-44)

Arthur agrees, and the youth rides forth to attack his foe. He soon overtakes him and after a short encounter succeeds in killing him (685-696), thus fulfilling his destiny in avenging the death of his father.

As for the death of the hero, mentioned in the last few lines of the poem, it may be regarded merely as the conventional method of getting rid of the hero of a romance, and as such perhaps stands as a later addition to the original material. Consequently, it does not concern us here.

Of the seven incidents of the Fated Prince formula, then, five are present in the English *Sir Perceval* in detailed form. A sixth is present in a reasonably and naturally interpreted substitute; while the remaining one has been modified, either to secure greater emphasis of a point in the precautions taken by the mother or to emphasize the condition which the author thought was imposed upon him by his use of the other folk-lore formula, the Male Cinderella. On the mere basis of mathematical calculation, the romance has a better claim

to classification under the Fated Prince formula than under Mr. Nutt's Expulsion and Return formula. On the basis of preserving essential incidents of a formula, the romance has no right to be classed under Mr. Nutt's formula; and I believe that the new classification here suggested is thoroughly justified.

As aforesaid, the Perceval romances are generally accepted as Male Cinderella or Dummling stories. There are several important types of Male Cinderella tales,¹ but the one with which we are here concerned has the following distinctive traits:

- I. The hero is reputed to be worthless and, sometimes, foolish.
- II. He is unprepossessing in appearance.
- III. He is likely to be gluttonous, careless, and lazy.
- IV. He is usually ill-treated by some member of the family. Sometimes, he is loved by another member of the family.
- V. He endures in silence the scornful abuse of others.
- VI. Some state of affairs exists which calls for the performance of a great feat.
- VII. The hero unexpectedly performs this great feat alone.
- VIII. He thereby attains great honor and eventually makes a profitable marriage.

Let us now examine the romance in its relation to this Male Cinderella theme. Incidents in common between this theme and the romance will be pointed out in brief, the chief stress being placed upon the variations. The

¹ See *The Unpromising Hero in Folk-Lore, Epic, and Romance*, my unpublished dissertation in the Library of Harvard University.

numerals used correspond to the incidents as just enumerated.

I

Sir Perceval bears the same reputation as that borne by the conventional Male Cinderella hero. The author not only calls him several times "the fole one the filde," or simply "the fole," but says (275-76),

The childes witt was fulle thynne
Whenne he scholde say oughte.

Moreover, we have the indirect opinion of the king himself concerning Sir Perceval, where the poet remarks (593-96),

The childe hadde wonede in the wodde,
He knewe nother evylle ne gude,
The kyng hym-selfe understode
He was a wilde manne.

II

The same close agreement holds also for the second incident, which concerns the hero's personal appearance. All that need be said here in regard to the personal appearance of the Male Cinderella hero is that he looks his part. He is reputed to be foolish, and where description is given, it usually agrees with his reputation. This is true in the case of Sir Perceval. Indeed, his appearance is, in large measure, responsible for that reputation, especially in the minds of the knights. As he first appears before them, he is described thus (266-276):

The chylde hadd nothyng that tyde,
That he myȝte inne his bones hyde,
Bot a gaytes skynne;

He was burely of body and therto riȝt brade,
One ayther halfe a skynne he haȝe,
The hode was of the same made
Juste to the chynne.

His hode was juste to his chynne,
The flesche halfe tourned with-inne,
The childes witt was fulle thynne
Whenne he scholde say oughte.

He makes the same ridiculous appearance when he presents himself before Arthur. He is still clad in his goat skins (658-660), and rides a mare which he guides by a withe instead of a bridle (421-424).

III

The third topic demands a little closer attention. In the character of Sir Perceval we find points at variance with the Male Cinderella formula as well as points in common with it. Consequently, some balance must be struck between them, the relative values determined, and an explanation for the variations suggested.

The character of the folk tale hero usually confirms his reputation. He may be portrayed as foolish, lazy, clumsy, stubborn, or gluttonous. He spends his time in the chimney corner or in the cinders by the kitchen fire. Not infrequently we find him exhibiting signs or proof of his cleverness before the great feat is attempted; and at all times he is fearless of danger and confident of his own ability. The character of Sir Perceval, in the first place, is decidedly complex; but it is no more so than we should expect in the case of the hero of a literary story. Moreover, as in the case of his personal appearance, it is due in some measure to Sir Perceval's character that the knights form an unfavorable opinion concerning him. An

analysis of that character shows reason both for and against such an opinion.

To be noted at the outset in connection with Sir Perceval's character are a few conventional epithets of little or no significance. Throughout the romance, we have him referred to as "Percyvelle the free," "Percyvelle the lyghte," "Percyvelle the wighte," "Percyvelle the bolde," or "Percyvelle the gode." Of but slightly more significance are lines like the following:

He was a gude knave.
(216)

Thus he wexe and wele thrave,
And was reghte a gude knave
With-in a fewe ȝere.
(226-228)

Faste he fonded to be free,
Thofe he were of no pryde.¹
(463-64)

In taking up the positive traits of the character of Sir Perceval, we notice at once that he is obedient and industrious. He follows his mother's instructions to the full limit of his intelligence, or rather beyond the limit of what his intelligence ought to have been. In this particular, the actions of Sir Perceval are at one with those of the Male Cinderella hero who shows his foolishness by his strict obedience.² After Perceval has been urged by his mother to pray to God, he says (249-252):

¹ Certainly the conventional Male Cinderella hero could never be charged with being proud. On the contrary, he is humble to a fault. After he performs some heroic deed, he often returns to his obscure position in an effort to keep his identity concealed.

² See the story of Giufa and the Plaster Statue, Crane's *Italian Popular Tales*, p. 291. See also the following references: Arnason, *Icelandic Legends*, p. 596; Basile, *Der Pentamerone, oder Das Märchen aller Märchen* (Felix Liebrecht), p. 56, No. 4; Beauvois, *Contes Populaires de la Norvège, de la Finlande, and de la Bourgogne*, p.

"By grete Godd," sayde he thanne,
 "And I may mete with that manne,
 With alle the crafte that I kanne
 Reghte so schalle I pray!"

Again, as he leaves home his mother gives him certain rules of conduct, saying (398-400),

"Luke thou be of mesure
 Bothe in haule and in boure,
 And fonde to be fre!"

And (402-4),

"There thou meteste with a knyghte,
 Do thi hode off, I highte,
 And haylse hym in hy!"

And Perceval (413-16),

"Bi grete God," sayd he,
 "Where that I a knyghte see,
 Moder, as ȝe bidd me
 Righte so schalle I!"

Perceval's conduct in the tent, where he stopped on his way to King Arthur, illustrates his effort to "be of mesure," as he understood it. Of the corn that he found therein, he fed one-half to his mare and left the remainder. Then he ate half of the meat, drank half of the wine, exchanged rings with the sleeping maiden, and departed. Truly, in the words of the poet (462),

How myȝte he more of mesure be?

203; Busk, *Roman Legends*, p. 371; Chambers, *Popular Rhymes of Scotland*, p. 101; von Hahn, *Griechische und Albanesische Märchen*, II, p. 154, No. 111; Haltrich, *Deutsche Volksmärchen aus dem Sachsenlande in Siebenbürgen*, p. 232, No. 64; Jacobs, *English Fairy Tales* (3d ed.), p. 152; Schneller, *Märchen und Sagen aus Wälschtirol*, p. 165, No. 57; Sébillot, *Contes Populaires de la Haute-Bretagne*, p. 219, No. 33; Stokes, *Indian Fairy Tales*, p. 27, No. 7; Wardrop, *Georgian Folk-Tales*, p. 165.

Although Sir Perceval is thus strictly obedient to the point of folly, and also gluttonous, as is indicated by his conduct in the maiden's tent, he nevertheless is not idle like his folk tale prototype. This is shown by the fact that he spent his spare time (and he had considerable) while at home with his mother in hunting in the wood, where (213-15)

He wolde schote with his spere
Bestes and other gere
As many als he myghte bere.

The references given to illustrate Sir Perceval's strict obedience show also how determined he is to execute anything that he has resolved upon. The best illustration of this trait, however, is his vow to have Arthur make him a knight, taken before Gawain and the others whom he met in the wood, and thus reported to his mother (373-384):

"Moder, at þonder hille hafe I bene,
Thare hafe I thre knyghtes sene,
And I hafe spokene with thame, I wene,
Wordes in throo;
I have highte thame alle thre
Before thaire kyng for to be,
Siche one schalle he make me
As is one of tho!"
He sware by grete Goddez myȝte,
"I schalle holde that I hafe highte,
Bot if the kyng make me knighte
To morne I salle hym sloo!"

This vow was even repeated in the presence of the king (599-612), a circumstance which illustrates the rude boldness, the somewhat impatient boorish nature of the youth. We are perhaps saved from any fatal results to the hero by Arthur's conditional promise to make him a knight

(645-48). This was not the first time, however, that Perceval showed his boorishness before the king. His very first appearance within the hall was marked by an exhibition of that trait of his character (493-96).

To be mentioned along with this trait of boorishness is Sir Perceval's impatience, which is usually the direct cause of his being provoked to anger. Indeed, if he had not been so impatient, he doubtless would have conducted himself more properly in Arthur's hall. As examples of the hero's impatience and anger, the following incidents may be cited: He has just met Gawain and the other knights in the wood and has asked which one of them may be the great God that his mother has told him about. Being informed that no one of them is such, he vows to slay them all unless they tell him what kind of things they are. Sir Kay then answers (298-304):

"Who solde we thanne say
That hade slayne us to day
In this holtis hare?"
At Kayes wordes wexe he tene,
Bot he grete bukke had bene,
Ne hadd he stonde thame bytwene,
He hade hym slayne thare!"

Again, when Perceval is before Arthur, waiting to be made a knight, the king takes time to reflect and to comment upon the likeness between the youth before him and his former knight, Syr Percyvelle. He tells of the death of that knight and of other points regarding vengeance upon his slayer. The king's remarks are followed by these lines (569-76):

The childe thoghte he longe bade
That he ware a knyghte made,
For he wiste never that he hade
A fader to be slayne;

The lesse was his menyng,
 He saide sone to the kynge,
 "Syr, late be thi jangleynge,
 Of this kepe I nane!"

These damaging traits in Perceval's character are perhaps the result of his fearlessness and his confidence, both of which characteristics are illustrated in his attitude toward Arthur and his knights. Likewise, the readiness with which he encounters the knight (641 ff.), and the words addressed to him (661-689) show our hero not only fearless of the impending combat but also confident of the result. Thereafter, no danger is too great for him to brave, no region too perilous for him to explore. His whole attitude in this particular was expressed as he paused before the maiden's bower on his way to Arthur's hall, and said (435-36),

"For oghte that may betyde,
 Thedir inne wille I."

We come now to the consideration of Perceval's cleverness, which is not at all that of the folk tale hero. The latter is frequently averse to any study and learning, whereas Perceval has an innate desire to learn, a desire which he shows by his inquisitive simplicity whenever anything strange comes to his inexperienced mind. When his mother gives him a spear, he asks (198-200):

"What manere of thyng may this bee,
 That ȝe nowe hafe takene mee?
 What calle ȝee this wande?"

And when he is told that it is a dart, he expresses real childish delight in what he has learned (205). Likewise, after he is told to pray to God, he asks (242-44):

"Whatkyns a Godd may that be,
 That ȝe nowe bydd mee
 That I schalle to pray?"

Again, he no sooner hears of King Arthur and his knights than he inquires (315-16):

“Wille kyng Arthoure make me knyghte,
And I come hym tille?”

And finally, when his mother advises him to take off his “hood” in case he meets with a knight, he replies (406-09):

“I saw never ȝit no menne;
If I solde a knyghte kenne
Telles me wharby.”

Another trait of cleverness, which, however, is characteristic of the folk tale hero, is seen in Perceval's resourcefulness, or originality. After he has caught the mare and is ready to start for Arthur's hall, he is obliged to improvise trappings for his steed (421-24):

Brydille hase he righte nane;
Seese he no better wane,
Bot a wythe hase he tane,
And keuylls his stede.

Moreover,—and here too there is agreement with the folk tale hero—Perceval is clever in inference and quick in imitation. After he has been told of “the grete Godd of hevene,” he sets out to (256)

Fynde hyme whenne he may,

and comes upon three splendidly accoutred knights. Never before has he seen or heard of any beings like them, and his simple mind immediately infers (279-280)

. that thay had bene
The Godd that he soghte!

Again, after he leaves the knights, he comes upon a stud of colts and mares, and observes (329-32):

..... "Bi seyne John,
 Swilke thynges as are gone
 Rade the knyghtes appone,
 Knewe I thaire name."

Then he catches one of these "thynges" and rides home to his mother, who asks him (363-64):

"What wille thou with this mere do,
 That thou hase hame broghte?"

The next few lines (365-72) illustrate the lad's habits of reasoning:

Bot the boy was never so blythe,
 Als whenne he herde the name kythe
 Of the stode-mere stythe,
 Of na thyng thanne be roghte!

Now he calles hir a mere
 Als his moder dide ere;
 He wened alle other horsez were,
 And had bene callede soo.¹

To be mentioned here as entirely outside the Male Cinderella formula are Perceval's swiftness of foot and his skilful use of the spear. Not only could he run down horses (325 ff. and 713 ff.) but also (221-24)

So wele he lernede hym to schote,
 Ther was no beste that welke one fote,
 To fle fro hym was it no bote,
 Whenne that he wolde hym have.

In summing up this detailed exposition of the character

¹ For further illustrations of this characteristic, see ll. 1690 ff., where Perceval learns the name "steed"; ll. 1717 ff., where he learns to fight with a sword; and ll. 741 ff., where he is about to despoil the slain knight by burning him out of his armor. His reason for this method is given thus (749-52):

He sayd, "My moder bad me,
 Whenne my dart solde brokene be,
 Owte of the irene brenne the tree,
 Now es me fyre gned!"

of Sir Perceval, we find that the following descriptive terms may properly be applied to him:—¹

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| A.—1. Industrious | B.—5. Strictly obedient |
| 2. Impatient | 6. Rude—boorish |
| 3. Inquisitive—
anxious to learn | 7. Bold—fearless—
confident |
| 4. Skilful physically | 8. Determined — reso-
lute |
| | 9. Resourceful — ori-
ginal |
| | 10. Clever in inference
—quick in imita-
tion |

The terms listed in the first group (A) are not applicable to the Male Cinderella of the folk tale; those listed under B are, and may be dismissed with that. It will be noticed, however, that there are absent from this list (B) certain traits of the hero's character well defined in the Male Cinderella formula and apparently essential to that formula. As already shown, we frequently find a folk tale hero who is lazy, dirty, stupid, indifferent, clumsy, or stubborn. Indeed, he may exhibit any number of these traits, and even others of a like uncomplimentary nature. Perceval, on the contrary, exhibits none of them. Not only that, but the qualities which he possesses (A) are exactly the opposite. The presence of one set of characteristics (A), of course, explains in a way the absence of the other. No hero could be described by the terms under A and at the same time be described by the terms just mentioned (lazy, dirty, etc.), which are gene-

¹ For purposes of comparison, these terms are arranged in two groups irrespective of the order of their illustration above.

rally applicable to the folk tale hero. Here, then, we find a serious modification of our type formula. How is it to be explained?

The absence of some of the conventional traits may be due to the influence of Male Cinderella tales outside of the limits of any strictly defined type. Such, for instance, would be the tales of the type in which the hero, usually of noble parentage, is regarded as unpromising, not because of any defect in character, but simply because of his servile and boorish appearance and of his menial position. But the influence of the Fated Prince motive, I think, affords a better explanation for this departure from the type. We do not find such derogatory epithets applied to the hero of a Fated Prince story, unless he happens to be where he is unknown. At any rate, if Sir Perceval were describable by such epithets, the real emphasis of the story would be perverted. His nature must be such as to excite and to retain his mother's love; and it is obvious at once that if he were set forth as a lazy, dirty, stupid, clumsy, or stubborn youth, no such feeling on the part of the mother would be possible, and this very essential motive of the story would be lost. Moreover, it must be remembered that Sir Perceval is going to be made a knight, and an author who has a feeling for the refinements of gentle society, and who is imbued with the spirit of chivalric idealism, would be sure to soften considerably such exceedingly disgusting traits as the Male Cinderella hero often possesses.

Furthermore, the explanation would also account for the presence in the story of the hero's traits listed under A, that is, his industry, his impatience, his desire to learn, and his physical skill. The last of these traits, especially, may be due to the leading idea of the poem.

The hero is to follow a chivalric career. To that end it is much more fitting that he be presented as swift of foot and graceful than as possessing the huge physical strength of a big booby.

This explains sufficiently, I think, the modifications of the Male Cinderella formula as preserved in the romance of *Sir Perceval*. And whether we explain or ignore these modifications, the hero is regarded as distinctly unpromising because of his appearance and his conduct, and that is enough for our contention.

IV

The next incident of the Male Cinderella formula is not found in the romance. Whenever the treatment of the folk tale Male Cinderella is emphasized, we find him despised and ridiculed by some member of his family, or by others with whom he comes in contact. Frequently, also, he is obliged to perform servile labor. Perceval, on the contrary, is not despised by anyone; he is not ill-treated; he is not obliged to perform servile labor. We know that his mother loved him devotedly—even distractedly; it cannot be said that the knights ill-treated him; and instead of his being assigned any menial tasks to perform, we find him granted the liberty of wood and field. How is this second variation from the Male Cinderella formula to be accounted for? Simply as the other variations are accounted for—on the basis of a combination with some other formula in which great love for the hero, by the parents, is so vital a trait as to demand its preservation in the new compound. Such, certainly, is the case with the Fated Prince formula; and if Sir

Perceval is a Fated Prince, he is treated as that formula demands.¹

The attitude of a Male Cinderella hero toward the treatment which he receives depends solely upon the nature and extent of that treatment. And the fact that Perceval receives no ill-treatment from others explains the absence of this incident from the story.

VI

The situation which gives the Male Cinderella hero of the folk tale a chance to reveal his power is variable. A favorite one is that designated as the Periodic Difficulty, which in brief is thus: At stated intervals a certain depredation is committed. Every effort is made to stop the depredation, but the offender invariably escapes. This is exactly the situation that we have in *Sir Perceval*. For five years Arthur has been repeatedly insulted and defied by the Red Knight, and no one has been able to avenge the insult. Perceval leaves home for the royal court, precisely as may folk tale heroes do, and when he arrives there learns of this state of affairs, which he is ready to remedy. Although this incident is common in romance and in popular story, one cannot fail to note that it parallels the type formula very closely.

VII

The manner of the revelation of the hero's power is more or less conventional in romance as well as in folk tale. Any one of a number of situations might be em-

¹ Mr. Griffith, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, p. 118, says that in the primitive stage of the story, the hero was "in appearance a fool but in reality a predestined hero."

ployed. Certainly, a successful combat in arms is what we look for in romance, and that is what we find in *Sir Perceval*. In slaying the Red Knight, Perceval is typical not only of the great class of romance heroes to which he belongs but of the great class of Male Cinderella heroes as well. It is worth noting, however, that in many romances the spectators or others concerned look for the hero to win; whereas, in a Male Cinderella story, the success of the hero is always sudden and unexpected, as is the case in this romance. This fact makes the parallel between Perceval and our folk tale hero considerably closer in this incident than otherwise would be the case.

VIII

The final disposal of the hero is also largely a matter of convention. He must, of course, attain great honor or riches, or marry a princess, or become king. Perceval does all three, and, as is frequently the case in the Male Cinderella folk tale, he takes his mother to live with him in his new home. As for his death in the Holy Land, that has been explained as a later addition to the story.¹

Of the eight incidents just considered, all of which are more or less vital to the Male Cinderella theme, five (Nos. I, II, VI, VII, and VIII) are preserved with strict fidelity in the story of *Sir Perceval*. Two (IV and V) are absent entirely, and another (III) has received slight modifications. The loss of V is dependent wholly upon the loss of IV; so we really have only one incident lost and one other changed. The loss of IV, as well as the modifications in III, has been fully accounted for by the demands of the Fated Prince formula, with which, as is

¹ *Supra*, p. 539.

here suggested, the Male Cinderella formula has been combined.

We are now ready to consider briefly the other versions of the romance and to see what bearing, if any, this classification of the English *Sir Perceval* has upon any of the current theories regarding the oldest form of the legend, as well as regarding the relation between Chrétien's version and certain others.

Two opposing views are held in regard to these points. One group of scholars holds that Chrétien's version is the oldest and therefore the ultimate source of all the other versions, including the folk tales that are commonly cited as parallels. The other group holds that there were one or more literary versions before Chrétien, traces of which are found within his poem as well as outside of it, especially archaic forms being preserved in the English *Sir Perceval*.

In her books on *The Legend of Sir Perceval*,¹ Miss Jessie L. Weston, making a comparative study of eleven or twelve texts of the story, reaches conclusions which in the main are those held by the second group of scholars just mentioned. The method of Miss Weston is followed here, and some things done repeat, to a slight extent, her work. Although certain ideas advanced here are in opposition to those of Miss Weston, her conclusions by and large are supported. For the main comparison, I shall use only five versions, designated as follows: *SP*, the English version *Sir Perceval*; *W*, Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*²; *Pro*, the Prologue to the *Mons* MS.³; *C*,

¹ Two vols., Grimm Library, London, 1906, 1909.

² Edited in 3 vols. by A. Leitzmann in *Altdeutsche Textbibliothek*, Halle, 1902-03. Translated in 2 vols. by Miss Jessie L. Weston, London, 1894.

³ Printed by Potvin in Vol. II of his *Perceval*, p. 17, ll. 485 ff.

Chrétien's *Conte del Graal*¹; and *Per*, the Welsh version *Peredur*.² To other versions references are made from time to time in the notes. Let us now turn to these five versions to see how they compare in their relation to the Fated Prince formula. The incidents of that formula are considered in order.

I. BIRTH AND FAMILY

Sir Perceval: Father is Syr Percyvelle a knight; mother is Acheffour, sister to King Arthur. Hero is the only child, born just before his father's death.

Wolfram: Father is Gamuret, Prince of Anjou, who had one brother; mother is Herzeleide, Queen of Wales and Norgales. Hero is the only child, born just after his father's death.

Prologue: Father is Bliocadrans, the last of twelve brothers;³ mother is not named. Hero is the only child, born just after his father's death.

Chrétien: Father and mother are not named. Hero is the youngest of three sons born several years before the death of his father and his brothers.

Peredur: Father is Earl Evrawc; mother is not named.

¹ *Perceval le Gallois ou Le Conte du Graal*, edited by Ch. Potvin for the Société des Bibliophiles Belges séant à Mons, 1886-71.

² This is found in *The Mabinogion*, translated by Lady Charlotte Guest, London, 1902.

³ The "Didot" *Perceval* and *Perlesvaus* agree with the Prologue in making Perceval's father the last of twelve brothers. The "Didot" *Perceval* is printed in Hucher's *Le Saint Graal*, Le Mans, 1875-78, Vol. 1, pp. 415 ff. The full title is *Perceval ou La Quête du Saint Graal*. Miss Weston calls this the Prose *Perceval*. The *Perlesvaus* is printed in Vol. 1 of Potvin's *Perceval*. It has been translated by Sebastian Evans (Temple Classics) under the title of *The High History of the Holy Grail*, two vols., London, 1898.

Hero is the youngest of seven brothers,¹ born some time before the death of his father and his brothers.

In some of the versions, Perceval has a sister, as well as an uncle or uncles on his mother's side. Miss Weston thinks that the "versions which give the father as one of twelve brothers represent the most generally received tradition," and that those versions which make the hero, "instead of an only child, or only son, the survivor of a more or less numerous family, appear to represent a later stage."² I have no quarrel with these suggestions as referring to different stages of the tradition; but I believe that those stages are comparatively late in the development of the Perceval material. Miss Weston says elsewhere, in considering the original fate of the mother: "If the *Perceval* legend be, as in common with many scholars of standing I believe it to be, a member of the '*Aryan Expulsion and Return Formula* group,' then the rôle of the mother was originally little less important than that of the son: it was she who in the first instance was disinherited; it is for her rights, equally with his own, that the hero contends. The natural logical conclusion of the tale would be the reunion of the mother and son, and the restoration of the former to her lawful estate. I believe," she concludes, "that this 'reunion' version represents the older and simpler form. When the story became more fully developed and complicated by the introduction of adventures originally foreign to it, the death of the mother would be introduced to explain and probably at first to excuse the son's failure to return to

¹ The Prose *Lancelot* gives the hero six brothers, the same as *Peredur*. Weston, *Legend of Sir Perceval*, I, p. 65.

² Vol. I, pp. 66-67.

her.”¹ This conclusion, be it noted, rests solely upon the premise that the Perceval legend belongs to the Expulsion and Return Formula group. It has already been shown in this study, I think, that that premise does not hold; consequently, the conclusion must fall. And yet, one might accept Miss Weston’s view, could those complications and new adventures in the story be shown to have been so great and so many as to have caused the reunion motive entirely to be forgotten by an author or by a narrator. But is it reasonable to suppose that such an important and such a unifying motive could be so forgotten? Moreover, which is the more likely story to invite additional adventures, the one that is complete in itself in the final reunion of mother and son, or the one in which the mother is disposed of at the time of the departure of the son? The one imposes certain restrictions, of time at least; the other, indeed, may never end, and thoughts of any particular ending may be far from the author’s mind.

Moreover, the death of the mother in *W*, *C*, and *Per*, at the departure of her son, is not so poorly motivated as at first appears. All along she has been trying to keep her son from becoming a knight. A career of arms for him means to her his certain death. The prophetic warning of her lord’s death, or of her other son’s death, as the case may be, has been ever before her. She sees in the departure of her son the fulfillment of what she considers as a prophecy concerning his future. The mental shock is terrific and the inevitable happens—she dies in a swoon. If the reunion motive really did precede the death motive in the development of the legend, how is the insanity motive in *SP* to be explained? If

¹ Vol. I, p. 128.

the insanity motive was in the story at the beginning, one can see how the death motive might be a deliberate substitution for it in later variations. But no one would assert for an instant that this insanity motive was part and parcel of the original story, even if the reunion motive was there, and even if the story was a variant of the Expulsion and Return formula. Then I suppose that we must say that it is a late interpolation into the old material. There appears to be a strong temptation, too freely yielded to, I believe, to explain every such obstacle to a desired conclusion on that basis. Why should such an incident be inserted into the story at all? It certainly is not needed for a reunion motive. Some important object, then, must have been in the author's mind for him to resort to such a device. I can think of no reason whatever for the first insertion of this incident into the English *Sir Perceval* which does not take into account an older incident which in some form the poet here was trying to preserve. Such an incident we have in the three other versions,—namely, the death of the mother at the departure of her son. What is it that causes the insanity of Achefflour in *SP*? The same thing that causes the death of the mother in the other versions—the belief that her past apprehension regarding the fate of her son has been (or will be) fulfilled. The insanity incident appears, then, in the reunion story as the natural survival of the death incident in an older version. If this is the case, the reunion motive itself must stand as a distinctly later development than the death motive.¹

¹ Mr. Griffith, *Sir Perceval of Galles*, pp. 36, 37, explains the death motive as follows: "The mother's fate is different in two different groups. In the Grail group she is said to fall dead of grief at her son's departure; in what I may call the folk-tale group she either

Furthermore, the close agreement of the Perceval legend with the Fated Prince formula makes it highly probable that in a very early form of the story the father and mother were not named, the hero was the only child, and nothing further was said of the mother after the departure of her son. The chief interest of the story being in the hero and his destiny, such neglect on the part of the narrator or the author would be easy. The next stage would then record the death of the mother at the son's departure, a still later development making her death known to the youth through some third party.¹ After such a story had been in existence for some time, it would be natural for some poet with constructive power, who saw the aimlessness of the whole thing, to unify the material

lives on to rejoin her son when he has achieved greatness, or nothing more is said of her at all. This difference I think I can explain. . . . The Grail group made the change. Some author (whether Chretien or an earlier one) decided to insert the Grail story into the Perceval tale. Now, in the story of the visit to the Grail castle one element that was fixed was the hero's failure to ask the important question concerning the meaning of it all when he saw pass before him the Grail and other objects. This early author conceived it to be a part of his duty to furnish an adequate reason for this failure; he sought it in the punishment of a sin; and for the sin he chose to make the mother die as a consequence of her son's departure. The motivation of the mother's death is undoubtedly poor. It is a contradiction to the whole fate element of the tale to make it a sinful thing for the hero to leave the forest to go seek his fortune. Wolfram (or his authority) felt the insufficiency of this unconsciously committed sin, but instead of getting out of the difficulty, he went farther into it, for he changed the character of the Red Knight (Ither), made him a relative of Parzival, and then counted it a sin for Parzival to slay him (ix, 1279 ff.). The folk-tale group—keeping its events always in the shadow of the pillar of cloud which is foreordination and compelling fate—slurs over the mother's unhappiness, leaves her well after her son's departure, and finds no place for sin and its punishment."

¹ Note in this connection that it is a third party in *SP* who informs Perceval that his mother is insane.

by substituting the reunion motive, retaining in the insanity motive the older death motive.¹ This, I believe, is the more natural method of growth. We look for unity in literary matters to follow chaos, not chaos to spring from unity. Now I do not imply by this that the English *Sir Perceval* is derived wholly from Chrétien's version. Far from it. I merely suggest that Chrétien's poem, as regards the fate of the mother, preserves material older in form than that of the English *Sir Perceval*. On the other hand, I believe that *Sir Perceval* preserves more archaic treatment in having the hero the only child.

In further comparison of the five versions under the first incident of the Fated Prince formula, we find that in three, *SP*, *W*, and *Pro*, the hero is the only child, and he is born just before or just after the father's death. In *C* and *Per*, on the other hand, the hero not only has two and six brothers respectively, but he is born some time before the death of his father and his brothers. In these two points, *C* and *Per* are farther removed from the formula than the rest are. A comparison under the second incident shows another departure from the formula on the part of *C*.

II. THE PROPHETIC WARNING TO THE MOTHER

Sir Perceval: The death of her husband in combat just after the birth of the hero.

Wolfram: The death of her husband in combat just before the birth of the hero.

Prologue: The death of her husband in combat about

¹The reunion motive might have come in under the influence of some other story or stories, which may even belong to the Expulsion and Return formula.

the time of the birth of the hero. Eleven brothers of the hero's father have been killed two or more years before.

Chrétien: The death of the two eldest sons in ambush two or more years after the birth of the hero, and the death of her husband from grief over the loss of his two sons.

Peredur: The death of her husband and six sons in tournament some little time after the birth of the hero.¹

In respect to the time of the "warning," *SP*, *W*, and *Pro* stand close to the formula and agree in having the husband killed in combat just before or just after the birth of the hero. In *C* and *Per*, on the other hand, the "warning" comes some time after the birth of the hero: in *C*, two or more years; in *Per*, we are not told how long.² Moreover, *SP* and *W* are more archaic, I think, in that the death of the husband is the only warning. The death of other relatives as recorded in the other versions must stand as a later development, in order to make the mother's flight seemingly better motivated. It will be noticed, furthermore, that in all but *C* the death of the husband and others is in combat or tournament. In *C*, the two sons are treacherously slain and the father dies from grief. This departure from what is apparently standard tradition is significant. It marks *C* at once as an impossible source of the other versions, so far as this incident of the story is concerned. In the next incident of our formula, further evidence for this contention is found.

¹In the *Perlesvaus* and in the "Didot" *Perceval*, the father does not die until after the son's departure from home.

²After the death of the father and the brothers is mentioned, we are told that the hero "was not of an age to go to wars and encounters, otherwise he might have been slain as well as his father and brothers."

III. THE FLIGHT TO THE WILDERNESS

The flight to the wilderness, be it remembered, is for the definite purpose of thwarting the prophecy, which, in the romances in question, amounts to a career of knight-hood and vengeance taken upon the slayer of Perceval's father. In this respect, *SP*, *W*, *Pro*, and *Per* agree and conform to the type; *C*, on the other hand, departs from the type, and that widely, the presence of the family in the wood being thus explained by the mother to her son: "after being deprived of his lands and property, Perceval's father was exiled. Owning a manor in the wood, he had himself and his family conveyed thither. He had three sons, the youngest, Perceval, being then two years of age."¹ The agreement of the four versions, *SP*, *W*, *Pro*, and *Per* with the formula in regard to this incident, and the departure from that formula by *C* is a convincing argument, I think, that *C* could not have been the only source from which those four versions drew.

IV. PRECAUTIONS TAKEN

Sir Perceval: The mother took with her only one maiden and a flock of goats. She denied learning to the youth until he was fifteen years of age.

Wolfram: The mother took a large household of servants and commanded them to speak no word of knight-hood in the presence of her son.

Prologue: The mother set out with a great company

¹Of this incident Miss Weston says: "The attribution of the flight into the woods to the father rather than to the mother is a detail foreign to the usual trend of the story" (Vol. 1, p. 66).

and had a beautiful manor built in the forest. She told her son ~~that~~ there were no other persons in the world.

Chrétien: The mother had a considerable household with her.

Peredur: The mother took none but "boys, women, and spiritless men"—a considerable company—and a herd of goats.

In regard to this incident and the practical agreement of the four versions, *W*, *Pro*, *C*, and *Per*, Miss Weston says: "The account, in which they all agree, of the mother's residence in the woods, her household, her cattle, fields, and lands, points to a much later, and more artificial, stage of the story than that represented by *Syr Percyvelle* or *Carduino*, where mother and child are practically alone, and their dwelling of the most primitive description."¹ It is a curious fact to note, by the way, that in a Fated Prince story contained in an Egyptian papyrus assigned to the fourteenth century before Christ, the father "caused a house to be built upon the desert; it was furnished with people and with all good things of the royal house, that the child should not go abroad."² It would seem, then, that the four versions which Miss Weston thinks represent a much later and more artificial stage of the story really contain this very old feature of the Fated Prince formula, and that the English *Sir Perceval*, on the contrary, is the version which departs from the type. Moreover, a feature like the one in *Sir Perceval* and *Carduino* may be primitive in itself or may be characteristic of a primitive society and at the same time may be used in a very late version of a well-known story, and therefore would not be

¹ Vol. I, p. 85.

² Maspero: *Les Contes Populaires de L'Egypte Ancienne*, Paris, 1906, pp. 168 ff.

a primitive feature of that story at all. The distinction between a primitive feature of a story and a primitive feature *in* a story seems to me well illustrated by this particular incident as it appears in *C*, *Pro*, and *Per*, on the one hand, and in *SP* on the other.

As for the remaining incidents of our formula, little need be said; they appear in all four versions¹ in strict conformity to the type. In all, the hero is granted some freedom and as a result meets several knights. In all, he gains intelligence concerning those knights and their equipment by inquiry, and decides to leave home. In all, he sets out into the world and finally follows the profession of arms. Differences of detail may be noted under each of these incidents in the several versions, but these are not of any significance. The chief variations come under the first four incidents, as we have seen, and although this is a small body of evidence from which to draw conclusions, it nevertheless is too significant to be ignored.

As far, then, as these five versions of the legend are concerned in their relation to the Fated Prince formula, two points seem clear. First, that Chrétien could not have been the only source of the other versions, or indeed of any one of them. Secondly, that there must have been a version of the story, older than any that we possess, in which the following incidents appeared:—

1. The father and the mother of the hero were not named.
2. The hero was the only child.
3. The father was killed just before or just after the hero's birth.

¹The Prologue, known as the Mons fragment, breaks off at line 1282 and does not contain the remaining incidents of the story.

4. The mother fled to the wood with her son.
5. A considerable company was taken along.
6. The mother died at the departure of her son.

The following table shows how these incidents are preserved in the different versions:—

1					C
2	W	Pro ¹		SP	
3	W	Pro	Per	SP	
4	W	Pro	Per	SP	
5	W	Pro	Per		C
6	W	Pro	Per		C

The meaning of this table is obvious. Of the six primary traits, so-called, Wolfram's *Parzival* preserves five, the Prologue five, *Peredur* four, the English *Sir Perceval* and Chrétien's *Le Conte du Graal* each three. The difference between this order of the five versions and that given by Miss Weston is considerable. Basing her conclusion on a comparative study of the *Enfances* of the hero as recorded in each version, Miss Weston regards *W* and *SP* as nearest the primitive form of the story, then *C*, then *Per*.² And further, she says that *Sir Perceval* shows "itself the most faithful reproduction of the original theme."³ The order of the versions suggested in

¹ Hero's father the last of twelve brothers.

² Vol. I, pp. 91, 92.

³ Vol. I, p. 326.

the table above is based upon a study of the *Enfances* of the hero in relation to the Fated Prince and Male Cinderella formulas. Wolfram still remains the best representative of the primitive form of the story; but *Sir Perceval* is reduced to a place beside Chrétien, both versions being farther removed from the supposed original than is either the Prologue or *Peredur*.¹

GEORGE B. WOODS.

¹ Mr. Griffith, p. 130, concludes that Chrétien could not have been the source for some parts of the English *Sir Perceval*, and that Chrétien's influence in any way is not necessarily to be supposed to account for any or all of *Sir Perceval*. The English poem, he thinks, is wholly independent of the French poem. He thinks it simpler and more in accordance with all the evidence in the case to consider it as an English singer's versification of a folk tale that was known in his district of Northwest England.